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BOOK REVIEWS

Creative Evolution. By HENRI BERGSON. Translated by A. Mitchell.
New York, Holt & Co., 1911. xv+407 p.

In view of the numerous reviews and other discussions of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, the appearance of this translation is hardly a sufficient justification for another extended and detailed exposition of the work. All students of philosophy, however, will be glad to see that Bergson is being made more accessible to the English-speaking public, particularly when the work of translating is done so successfully as in the present instance. That the translator has brought to his task a proper sense of the obligation which he had assumed is evident from the fact that he has combined so well the demands of accuracy with Bergson's well-known felicity of style. The service to philosophy is all the greater from the timeliness of the work.

Aside from its intrinsic merit, Bergson's *Creative Evolution* is of peculiar significance at the present time because it makes prominent an element in the pragmatic movement which requires just such emphasis as Bergson gives to it. The pragmatic attack on rival theories that has been going on of recent years has undoubtedly been lacking in some of the aspects of organized warfare. To a considerable extent the assaults have been determined by the tastes and predilections of the individual leaders. Sometimes it is the question of truth that is put into the foreground; at other times it is the fact that experiencing or knowing works a change in its object; or again it is the dictum that man is the measure of things. These different topics are of course far from being unrelated. But the peculiar intimacy of their union, and at the same time their compatibility with the belief in an external world along the general lines of naive realism has not been brought out as fully as the case permitted; and hence an air of subjectivism and paradox has hung about the pragmatic position. It would scarcely be correct to say that *Creative Evolution* is a conscious attempt to remedy this defect. But at all events, the emphasis of Bergson's discussion is preponderantly on the 'objective' side; and moreover his treatment of duration may serve as a convenient means wherewith to correlate and unify the pragmatic point of view.

That duration is a real fact is in itself scarcely a novel doctrine. In Bergson's hands, however, this fact becomes alive with new vigor and with added significance. That the past is prolonged into the present and abides there, actual and acting, not only furnishes us with the clue to the errors of other systems, but it enables us to pool our mysteries and our epistemological perplexities in the one inclusive fact that Becoming is more fundamental than Being. As a rule, the insistence that duration is real has not prevented thinkers from taking away with the left hand what was previously bestowed with the right. A consistent treatment of duration from this standpoint necessitates a radical reconstruction of our theories concerning the relation of consciousness and object, a reconstruction that has never been rigorously carried out in the past. If we hold, for example, that the character of duration is such as to compel the belief that the past is in some sense

projected into the present, our recollections of the past are evidently put on a wholly different footing. According to Bergson, "the very basis of our conscious existence is memory, that is to say, the prolongation of the past into the present, or, in a word, duration acting and irreversible" (p. 17). In order to recall the past, then, it is neither necessary nor possible to copy or apprehend a pre-existent reality, for theories of this sort ascribe to the past, by implication at least, a finished character which abolishes what is essential in duration. Nor have we need of resort to a transcendental unity which holds together in eternal completeness the constituents of the temporal process, since such a unity likewise nullifies time. As James says: "Reality *falls* in passing into conceptual analysis; it *mounds* in living its own undivided life—it buds and bourgeons, changes and creates. Once adopt the movement of this life in any given instance and you know what Bergson calls the *devenir réel* by which the thing evolves and grows." And he adds that "philosophy should seek this kind of living understanding of the movement of reality, not follow science in vainly patching together the fragments of its dead results." (*Pluralistic Universe*, p. 264.)

This standpoint, furthermore, provides the answer to the question how it is possible to know a pre-experiential reality. Our human experiences may be viewed as the culminating points in which are merged the pre-existent enduring processes of the real that lead up to them. Within those experiences we find that onward rush, that all-penetrating change, without which time is naught. Because time is of this character, we can take our stand within our experiences and make affirmations regarding the events which occurred prior to all experience. Our experience is immersed, so to speak, in the flux of things: it is not a function that dwells apart in order to take photographic note of mundane events. Our experiences testify to a past and a future from which they can be separated only by abstraction. The apparent difficulty as to how our knowing can produce a change in things without thereby falsifying its data is, therefore, no genuine difficulty at all. It is simply a special phase of the question as to how anything can change without losing its identity as a result. Before this question our logic is helpless, since it is obliged to abstract and to fixate its material before it can proceed. But the real is constantly solving the puzzle which our logic declares to be insoluble, since it maintains the supremacy of Becoming over Being and enthrones change and flow at the heart of things. If Becoming is in any true sense our final category, it is clear that we must look to the end in order to understand the beginning. The necessity of interpreting things in terms of our human experience is not a limitation or a concession to our finitude and impotence, but is a condition imposed by the real itself. To quote James again: "Undeniably something comes by the counting [of the stars in the 'dipper' constellation] that was not there before. And yet that something was *always true*. In one sense you create it, and in another sense you *find* it. You have to treat your count as true beforehand, the moment you come to treat the matter at all." (*The Meaning of Truth*, p. 94.)

Bergson's view, moreover, forces him to the conclusion that knowledge is of a 'practical' character. Since the real is in incessant change, the only way in which we can know it is to have the living, changing experience. Logical analysis inevitably changes its nature. We murder to dissect. In order to control our experiences we endow certain features of them with a permanence which is not theirs by inherent

right. The truth of our conceptual thinking is therefore necessarily relative to the end which we have in view at the moment. "If the intellect were meant for pure theorizing, it would take its place within movement, for movement is reality itself, and immobility is always only apparent or relative. But the intellect is meant for something different. Unless it does violence to itself, it takes the opposite course; it always starts from immobility, as if this were the ultimate reality; when it tries to form an idea of movement, it does so by constructing movement out of immobilities put together" (p. 155).

This contrast, however, between movement and immobility may lend itself to misinterpretation. Since thought is unable to grasp Becoming or duration, we seem to have here a peculiar opposition between thought and immediate experience. Yet the assertion that "movement is reality itself" presumably is not to be taken in the sense that movement is always an experienced fact wherever there is any experience at all, but that when we reflect upon our experiences we are obliged to assert the "reality" of the movement, even though our attention may not have been directed to the movement at the time. Movement is real in that it is "true" for all experiences. Until there is occasion for reflection, neither Becoming nor Being need be experienced as such. In other words, the concept of Becoming is as much a tool as is any other concept. Becoming or duration is more fundamental than static being, in that it is the concept which must be employed when we reflect upon the procedure of the sciences and of every day thinking and attempt to reconstruct our data so as to harmonize and unify our knowledge.

It should be added, in conclusion, that in these brief comments the bearing of the principles laid down in *Creative Evolution* upon current questions is stated rather more directly than is done by Bergson himself. Moreover, a great deal that is interesting and significant in his exposition is necessarily omitted from consideration here. There can be no doubt that Dr. Mitchell's excellent translation will secure for the author a circle of readers more nearly commensurate with his importance for present-day thought.

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The Baganda: An Account of their Native Customs and Beliefs. By the Rev. J. ROSCOE. London, Macmillan & Co.; New York, The Macmillan Co., 1911. pp. xix., 547. Price \$5 net.

The Bantu kingdom of Buganda, now one of the five provinces of the Uganda Protectorate, lies on the northwest shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza. It fills a troubled chapter in the colonial history of the last quarter of the nineteenth century; and the name of its last great king, Mutesa, is familiar—in the puzzling form M'tesa—to every one who has dipped into the story of African exploration. Mutesa reigned from 1857 to 1884; it was he who welcomed the Zanzibar Arabs and from their example reclothed and rearmed his subjects; it was he, too, who received Speke in 1862 and Stanley in 1875, and who through Stanley appealed to the people of England for missionaries. Mr. Roscoe, himself a missionary sent out by the C. M. S., tells us in his preface that he spent twenty-five years in the country. He must, then, in all probability, have arrived in Buganda before Mutesa's death and the murder of Bishop Hannington; he must have witnessed the coming of Lugard with Sudanese and sleeping-sickness in 1891; and he saw the final reconstruction of government and administration effected by Sir Harry Johnston in 1899 and the following years. Of all these things the